

## NOTES ON THE HOG DEER IN BURMA.

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*(Read before the Bombay Natural History Society on 18th Feb., 1902.)**(With 2 Plates.)**CERVUS PORCINUS.*

Burmese names.—DAYAI or DARAI.

Hog deer are plentiful in many parts of Lower Burma, particularly so on the grassy plains and grass-covered islands in the delta; they are also met with in suitable localities in Upper Burma, and are numerous on the Pedaing Plain, Myitkyina District, where, I understand, many may be seen out grazing in the early mornings and evenings.

They are confined to the plains, never, as far as I am aware, being found in the hills, or in heavy jungles, though they will frequent grass land in open jungle. They are often found in the belts of long grass, seen on the banks of some rivers, and many inhabit the stretches of grass and mangrove jungle near the sea. In my experience, wherever Thetkai grass (*Imperata cylindrica*) abounds, they show a preference for it, possibly because not being so dense as the Kaing (*Saccharum spontaneum*), it is cooler; but where grounds are much disturbed, they take shelter in the heaviest elephant grass cover available. Though many deer of both sexes may live in a particular stretch of grass country, they never, as far as I know, collect in herds, but are generally found solitary, though at times two or three may be put up not far apart, or may even be seen grazing together.

As a rule, they graze from about 5 p.m. till 7 a.m., though in secluded and undisturbed localities they may begin to feed earlier, and leave off later. I have never found them grazing far from cover, apparently preferring to keep to the small hidden glades or kwins, and the depressions or yô's, sometimes met with between patches of long grass.

The deer without doubt graze on the large kwins (plains) during the night, as their tracks may frequently be seen in such places in the early morning. Their food consists chiefly of grasses, such as Myet-za (*Cynodon dactylon*), the tender shoots of the Kaing, which springs up soon after it is fired, Doung Sa-ba, Nat Sa-ba or wild rice (*Oryza coartata*) and others. I have frequently found them grazing on a leguminous plant, the Nyan Bin (*Desmodium reptans*) which grows



Midterm Bros. Photo-imp. London.

THE HOG-DEER.  
(*Cervus porcinus*)



luxuriantly in many places in Lower and Upper Burma, and to which brow-antlered deer are also partial. Burmans have informed me that hog deer will under cover of darkness enter cultivation if in the immediate vicinity of cover.

These animals usually go to water just before or shortly after dark. When returning to camp late in the evening, several deer may be put up in the grass leading up to the water-supply. During the day they lie concealed under the grass, and do not, like the Thamin stags, leave it to wallow in the mud and slush of drying up pools.

The hot weather (about the middle of March) is, perhaps, the best time of year to hunt them; the greater portion of the heavy grass has by that time been burned, and the water-supply is limited. Hog deer may occasionally be stalked, but, in order to obtain such sport, a knowledge of all the likely places to find them is requisite; these can then be visited during the early hours of the morning, and, with luck, one or two may be discovered grazing, in which case, with ordinary care, a successful stalk may be made, as they are not more difficult to approach than other deer. Shooting from elephants may also be tried, but as well-trained *shikar* elephants are distinctly rare over here, it cannot be recommended. I certainly have not had the good fortune to find one. A few years ago, a friend and I, being anxious to try this method, procured two elephants—ordinary timber-working animals; the only thing to recommend them was that they stood fire fairly well, but were, nevertheless, nervous and easily scared. Having no howdahs, we were obliged to sit in ordinary Burmese elephant baskets which were most uncomfortable. The elephants afforded us plenty of excitement, and we obtained many shots; but owing to their everlasting antics and the fact that we used rifles, the bags were extremely small. We hoped in the following year to make better arrangements, but were not given the opportunity, as some one stole the elephants. Other means had to be devised for circumventing them. After consultation with the *shikaris*, it was decided to construct a moderately high seat, or small platform, and to fix it into a bullock cart; to lessen the effects of the terrible jolting, pillows (gunny bags filled with straw) were used. A steady pair of bullocks with a *shikari* as driver rendered this contrivance an admirable substitute for an elephant. Close, but not always easy, shots were obtained, and my experience is that a bolting hog deer is an uncommonly hard target to hit. The great objection to the use

of the bullock cart is that bullocks are so dreadfully slow over rough ground. Some hog deer lie so close as to get up almost under an elephant's feet or just in front of the bullocks. If a stag happens to be bolting in the direction of low grass near by, it is advisable not to fire, for, not infrequently after rushing for some thirty or forty yards, he may pull up for a few seconds, in which case an easy shot is obtained.

Stags may be decoyed to leave cover by imitating "calls," at which some Burmans are very clever. This is usually done by placing a blade of grass between the thumbs, closing the hands, and blowing into them. Professional *shikaris*, who go in for selling flesh to villagers, take every advantage of this method, and thus kill many deer. Another plan employed by the Burmans is as follows.—On a very dark night two or three men proceed to grounds frequented by deer. The leader carries a light on his head (the light is usually placed in a basket or pot with the front removed); this man also has bracelets, and at times anklets, to which small bells are attached. The confederates follow close behind. The tinkling of the bells no doubt attracts the attention of the deer who stands in astonishment at the glare of the light, and even advances towards it, and, when close enough, is cut down or speared. When Burmans were permitted to carry firearms, they shot the deer.

During the hot season, and also towards the close of the rains, villagers often hunt hog deer with dogs, so called Pegu hounds, and at times have excellent sport, as the deer cannot sustain a high speed for any length of time. I have known the dogs to run three deer down by 8 a.m. This form of sport is most exciting, but, unless one is in the "pink" of condition, owing to the heat the strain is too great on an European.

The name hog deer, no doubt, originated from their peculiar action when running which is certainly hog-like. When alarmed or disturbed they go off with a rush, galloping low, carrying the head well down, with the tail erect, and the constant bobbing of the tail is very often the only visible portion of the beast as he rushes wildly through the long grass. The Burmans believe that there are two kinds of hog deer—one they call the Dayai-pyauk (spotted), the other, Dayai-nyo (brown); the latter is said to be smaller than the former. For my own part, I do not believe the statement to be correct; and, in my opinion, the idea is founded on the fact that an occasional adult like many fawns is distinctly spotted.

The rutting season is April and May. Tame stags sometimes show a tendency to be vicious during this period. In the natural state, however, I do not think they can be very combative, for the simple reason that they do not collect in herds, and thus males have not to fight for the hinds ; and, further, if fights were of frequent occurrence, head with broken points would constantly be met with, whereas it is in my experience unusual to find an imperfect head.

The hinds, I think, commence to breed during their second year. The period of gestation is from six to seven months ; the young ones are born in the long grass during October and November. There is usually one calf at a birth. I have never heard of twins. In the gardens here the hog deer sometimes drop their young as late as March and April.

The majority of stags cast their antlers during the months of July and August, though some retain them as late as towards the close of September, and at the present time (20th October) there are three young stags in the gardens here still with their horns on (prongs), while all the old stags are showing from 2" to 4" of their new antlers in velvet. I have met with stags in velvet as late as the first week in March and one stag as late as the 3rd of May.

*Description.*—These deer are rather long in the body and low on the legs. The relative shortness of the fore limbs gives them a peculiar appearance, *i.e.*, they are low in front, the croup is slightly arched, and the hind legs are carried well under the body. The stags have neither mane nor ruff. Hog deer gallop low, and, when running, the tail is invariably erected by a strong muscle, in many animals curling so much as to touch the back. While moving in the open, the head is not carried low, as is the case when moving through cover.

*Colour.*—General colour darkish-brown, with a more or less decided yellowish or chestnut tinge, and a faint speckling or mottling through the coat. There is a certain similarity of the coat to that of the ordinary Indian mungoose. The under-parts and the legs from the shoulders and thighs down are much darker in colour than those of the upper parts of the body, and are especially marked in old stags. The colour of the hair on the under-surface of the tail, perineum, and inside thighs is white, as also is the hair lining the inside of ears and that of the chin. The colour of the hair covering the face and head is generally slightly paler than that of the body, while that surrounding